



Start of [Dear Mr. Weisskopf].

AR 11637

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[Dear Mr. Weisskopf], 1963

DR. MAX HORKHEIMER
PROFESSOR

FRANKFURT AM MAIN
WESTENDSTRASSE 70
TEL. 77 25 40

February 5, 1963

Mr. Victor Weisskopf,
6830 Pershing Ave.,
St. Louis 30, Missouri.

Dear Mr. Weisskopf:

Mr. Shuster, the Director of the European Office of the American Jewish Committee, has sent me a copy of your letter of January 11 in which you expressed some concern about the possibility of encountering an anti-Semitic atmosphere in Frankfurt university circles. He thought I would be better able to put your mind at rest, as I returned here from the United States as early as 1950 to take up a chair of philosophy and sociology. However, the degree of anti-Semitism in present-day Germany is very hard to judge in spite of the large number of public opinion polls that have been conducted on the question, as these tend to contradict each other to quite an extent. Just the same, I hope I can answer your letter in a way to satisfy you.

I feel very strongly that it is our duty to be on constant guard against the possibility of a new increase of anti-Semitic feeling and actions, and the wave of anti-Semitic desecrations in the winter of 1959/60 was a definite warning to this effect. Yet this very event also showed quite clearly that the vast majority of the population is not prepared to be identified with the perpetrators, and around the university itself, there was a very definite reaction against these incidents. I have been teaching at Frankfurt university for twelve post-war years and not once during all that time have I detected any sign of hostility from the students that might have been traced to my being a Jew, even though I keep identifying myself with the victims of Nazi terrorism. Even though you as a student will not be in the same position as I am, it would very much surprise me if you came across any overt anti-Semitism here which does not of course discount the possibility of your overhearing an occasional anti-Semitic remark, which would, however, be more in the way of the exception proving the rule, and might occur just as easily in any other country.


A point to bear in mind is that the average age at the university is about 23, so that most of the students were five or six at the end of the war, while the minimum of the Hitler Youth movement was 10. Hence, the student of today is in general too

young to have been under direct Nazi influence, although naturally there are exceptions, the indirect influence through Nazi parents being one factor to be taken into account in this connection. However, of all the many political and non-political student societies, the right wing radicals are only a splinter group.

Should you decide to spend a year at Frankfurt University, I and my staff at the Philosophical Seminar and the Institut fuer Sozialforschung would be very glad to meet you and answer any further questions you may then have.

With my very best wishes for your studies,

Yours sincerely,


Max Horkheimer

Re: Max Horkheimer letter

Dear Sir,

Thanks for taking my call last week.

The context is as follows:

I entered Washington University in St. Louis in the fall of 1961, having graduated from nearby University City High School that spring. To fulfill my language requirements for a BA degree, I enrolled in intermediate German, continuing studies begun in high school. Studying German seemed natural: we had numerous books and family documents in German in the house, and my family on both sides originated from German-speaking areas or towns – Prague, Baden-Württemberg, Breslau, and areas then described as Bavaria. Relatives began settling in St. Louis during the early 1860s, and in Arkansas and California slightly later.

At the beginning of my sophomore year, in 1962, the Department of German offered me and my classmates the opportunity to spend a year at the University of Frankfurt/Main (UFFM), as part of an exchange program with that school. To a fellow with considerable *wanderlust* in his blood, this was an irresistible opportunity. To satisfy my Mom's concerns about lingering anti-Semitism in post-war Germany, I wrote a letter to the AJC, which Horkheimer references.

Unfortunately, I did not meet Professor Horkheimer while in FFM.

Thanks in part to Horkheimer's letter, I had priceless experiences and made friendships and family contacts in Germany, England, and Israel which continue to the present, personally and through my children. Two of my three children traveled to Prague on their own, and visited their great-great grandfather's gravesite in the Strasnitzer Friedhof there (where Kafka is buried).



End of [Dear Mr. Weisskopf].
